

the time the first referendum on EEC membership was held in 1972, the battle-lines were drawn. The parties have more or less stuck to their trenches ever since. The most dramatic change in four decades has been the Progress Party's coming out in favour of EU membership in the late 1980s, before returning to neutrality after the 1994 referendum. The salience of the European question may have fluctuated, but the old patterns of party-based Euroscepticism persist.

The European question first became pressing in Norway when the UK decided to seek membership of the EEC in the summer of 1961, a few months before the Norwegian election. In contrast to the Danish and Irish governments, which quickly followed London's lead, the Norwegian government hesitated.³ The Labour government eventually came out in favour of membership, but the party was less than united. Its new (anti-NATO) rival on the far left, the Socialist People's Party, was hardly about to endorse European integration. On the centre-right, the Conservatives and Liberals

origins of Socialist Left's opposition lies in other policy dimensions (foreign policy, participatory democracy).

Although it is sometimes useful to present Euroscepticism as a single cleavage or dimension when mapping party systems, this raises both theoretical and empirical questions. Summing up the literature on cleavages, Stefano Bartolini & Peter Mair define a cleavage to include an *empirical* element (i.e. objective social structure), a *normative* element (i.e. a subjective dimension) and an *organisational or behavioural* element (i.e. action or organisation), and therefore constituting a '*form of closure of social relationships*'.⁸ By such a definition divisions over European integration hardly qualify, and Euroscepticism becomes a dimension or policy issue rather than a cleavage. Even so, the variation in support for European integration among mainstream West European parties turns out to be more complex and plural if analysis is extended beyond the decade after the Single European Act, let alone if the Central European states are considered. Euroscepticism in centre-right parties varies considerably across the continent, with the British Conservatives, Fidesz in Hungary and the Czech Civic Democratic Party having adopted more Eurosceptic positions in the last decade, but their Scandinavian, German and Dutch counterparts have not following suit. On the centre-left the Greek, Spanish and Italian parties turned pro-EU as they entered office, and a few other parties have flirted with Euroscepticism when in opposition; in East Central Europe, social democrats have been solidly pro-EU, whether former communists or not.

The very plurality of policy stances and ideologies that have been invoked as the bases for opposition to European integration suggests that it is perhaps better understood as a 'touchstone of dissent' than as a single issue. The very term *Euroscepticism* has proven somewhat elusive, partly because of its origins as shorthand for opposition to European integration (which makes the term unavoidable, however problematic it might be), but also partly because of the variety of parties and factions that have mobilised opposition to various aspects of European integration. Hence Paul Taggart's suggestion Euroscepticism is best analysed as an encompassing term that "expresses the idea of contingent or qualified, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration."⁹ Perhaps the most useful distinctions, particularly with respect to the dynamics of change, is between opposition to European integration in principle and more contingent opposition linked to specific interests. Szczerbiak & Taggart's 'hard' and 'soft' labels are now widely used to capture this distinction.¹⁰ Although the question of whether a country should participate in closer European integration might be seen as dichotomous, opposition to participation in European integration ranges from absolute rejection to scepticism about particular initiatives. Euroscepticism entails opposition to something specific, but there is considerable variety in the bases for this opposition. At a tactical level, several parties have found it useful to invoke Euroscepticism in

⁸ S Bartolini & P. Mair, *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability: the Stabilization of European Electorates 1885-1985*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.216; D. W. Rae & M. Taylor, *The Analysis of Political Cleavages*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1970).

⁹ P. Taggart, 'A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary West European Party Systems', *European Journal of Political Research*, 33 (1998), 363-388, p.366.

¹⁰ P. Taggart & A. Szczerbiak, "Parties, Positions and Europe: Euroscepticism in the EU the Candidate States of Central and Eastern Europe", *Sussex European Institute Working Paper* no.46, *Opposing European Research Network Working Paper* no. 2 (2001); and their OUP volumes cited in Note 1.

electoral appeal against the governing party or coalition. Others have found that their main policies have a European dimension, and that opposition to government policy can be cast in term of opposition to integration. More principled objections to European integration include nationalism, concern for democracy or sovereignty, or even internationalist opposition to regional integration. To be sure, most Eurosceptic parties combine several of these elements. The common theme is dissent: opposition to government policy on European integration. Euroscepticism therefore emerges as a somewhat nebulous phenomenon, linked to a range of ideologies, strategies and tactics. Far from representing a single issue, let alone a new cleavage, parties' opposition to European integration is linked inextricably to the party system and patterns of competition.¹¹

If 'Euroscepticism' is thought of as a more or less 'empty box', into which a broad range of policy positions can be put, Norwegian party-based opposition to European integration is less amazing in the comparative context. Labour and the Conservatives' support for European integration is broadly comparable to most of their counterparts in small consensual democracies such as their Scandinavian neighbours, the Low Countries and the Alpine republics: based on economic policy and liberal ideologies. Something similar holds for the 'territorial' centre parties' scepticism, based on economic interests and cultural identity, although the comparisons would include Northern Italian or Bavarian parties and agrarian parties in East Central Europe.¹² Norwegian left socialist opposition to European integration has parallels both in the communist left and some 'new left' parties in Western Europe, though this picture is complicated somewhat by the fact that the far right is more Eurosceptic in most countries. Yet even if the 'box' is empty, Euroscepticism is elaborated as opposition to a specific project. When EU policy is opposed on the grounds that there is too much or too little regulation/redistribution/intervention in any given area, the policy content of Euroscepticism is cast in thoit r(abogn6(m)8(iarties of 0.1ouroscepticisgies.))TjETEMC

much as on the actual challenges. Some are more immune to contagion from their competitors than others. Whereas most of the large centre-right and -left parties have faced strong incentives to adapt to their competitors' organisational and strategic changes, whether in the form of contagion from the left in the shape of successful social democrat parties or the catch-all parties on the centre-right, others have proven more resistant.¹³ Richard & Peter Katz Mair find that many catch-all parties are becoming more modern 'cartel' parties, but point out that these parties face challenges by for example protest parties.¹⁴ Many parties have found the catch-all model difficult to imitate, or rejected it. This applies to communists and greens on the left, agrarian and denominational parties in the centre, and new populist parties on the right. These alternatives are a matter of strategy as much as party organisation. Even if, over time, most parties may employ more full time professional party officials, rely more on public funding and less on activist mass memberships, or use the media and pollsters more extensively, it does not necessarily follow that they abandon their strategies of interest representation or protest. In other words, even if party organisations and

party strategy.¹⁹ Even for parties which ideology or policy preferences predispose them to strong pro- or anti-EU stances, the quest for votes and participation in coalition government shape their actual positions.

Figure 1
Party goals and
strategy



Figure 2 Parties and strategy	Protest: Competing at the flanks	Catch-all: Defining left vs. right	Interests: Cross-cutting left vs. right
– 1880		Elite party	
1880 –		Mass party	
1919 –	Anti-system party		Interest party
1945 –		Catch-all party	
1970 –	Protest and new populist parties	Cartel party	Single issue party

The European question is likely to play out according to different dynamics across the three sets of strategies. Although these are of course ideal-types, and real political parties hardly follow these 'pure' strategies, the trade-off between policy, votes and office, and even party management, play out somewhat differently for parties that are closer to each of the three strategies. If a party's core values are incompatible with supranational governance or its ideology and policy preferences jar with those of the EU, there is a substantive base for Euroscepticism. Yet, the more immediate concerns of maximising votes and winning office are more sensitive to institutional pressure, and may provide incentives for a party to soften Euroscepticism (or to modify a pro-EU stance). The party's position relative to its target electorate depends a mixture of the two types of pressure. If opposition to EuThe i603grapean quion to Eu]TJ0.0002 Tc 0896 0 Tw 6.5li

strategies of opposition and coalition building evolve. The third and last section explores Norwegian party-based Euroscepticism in this comparative context.

The Politics of Opposition and European Integration in Norway

First, although all Norwegian parties have become more ‘professionalised’ only two of them warrant the classification of catch-all parties in Kirchheimer’s sense – Labour and the Conservatives. Dating back to the introduction of parliamentary rule in the 1880s, these parties come close to their West European ideal types of a conservative party on the right that adopts a free market position and a social democratic left that eventually plays down ideology in the pursuit of votes. In a country where territorial cleavages have been salient, both parties have been associated with the Oslo elite. Their competition has defined the left-right spectrum in Norwegian politics, reflecting strategies that pit the two parties against each other as the main opponent and entails a focus on socio-economic issues. In line with their economic and foreign policy, both have come out in favour of close Norwegian participation in European integration, including full EU membership. However, Labour has been more divided on the issue, as its left wing has harboured strong anti-EU dissent from the party leadership’s line.²⁴ Neither party faces strong incentives to play up the European issue. There is little or no indication that emphasising the quest for membership attracts voters in national elections. On the contrary, both parties have lost out to Eurosceptics opponents, Labour particularly in the early 1970s and the Conservatives in the 1990s. Moreover, Labour has long been divided on the question of EU membership. Its severe divisions in the early 1970s have since prompted more cautious approaches, e.g. focussing on the EEA arrangements in the 1980s until the membership question became all but inevitable in the early 1990s. Although they have not been hit severely by internal dissent, the Conservatives’ preference for coalitions with the centre-parties has forced the party to play down or freeze the question of EU membership when in government. On the other hand, the two parties perceive each other as their main opponents, and their own role when the other is in office therefore entails a degree of opposition to the other’s initiatives. Hence Labour’s criticism of the centre-right governments’ timid positions on European integration in the second half of the 1960s and the Conservatives’ similar criticism of Labour during the EEA negotiations in the early 1990s.

Labour and the Conservatives have thus defied the more usual West European pattern of adopting slightly more Eurosceptic positions when in opposition than in government; reversing this pattern largely because of their need for support from Eurosceptic parties when in office, whether in coalitions or as minority governments. In other respects they are close to their counterparts, particularly in Scandinavia where free-market-oriented Conservative parties have long seen European integration as an ideologically attractive proposition, in line with their free-market policy-orientation and ideology (this also holds for the Danish Liberals, who have long left their agrarian background for a catch-all strategy). Only the social democrats have featured substantial Eurosceptic factions, and these can be traced to a combination of resistance to an EU-driven free market that might undermine the domestic welfare

²⁴ J. Saglie, “Between Opinion Leadership and ‘Contract of Di

name and its stance on European integration.²⁷ In the two Centre parties' cases, the combination of changed circumstances afte

question are policy and coalition politics. Its recent more protectionist and interventionist stance may be driving the party away from its earlier EU-enthusiasm. However, its quest for participation in a non-socialist coalition continues to generate incentives not to antagonise the Conservatives over an issue in which there appear to be few votes to be gained. Both flanking parties' leaderships are flirting with more conventional catch-all strategies that move them closer to mainstream government-opposition competition.

The contrast with other European parties is much stronger on the right flank than on the new left (where some green parties fit as well). The Scandinavian left and green parties have generally opposed or been sceptical to European integration on similar grounds as the Socialist Left in Norway, though the Denmark's Socialist People's Party has been prepared to advocate 'yes' votes in referendums after negotiating cross-party pacts with the other parties (except the far right).³¹ The party has now come around to a pro-EU position, but it has modified its overall left-wing position in general. Only in Finland is there no longer any 'new left' opposition to the EU, although the Left and Green Leagues' formal neutrality on the EU issues masks considerable internal opposition to participation in European integration.³² This far left opposition to the EU also fits the older patterns of far left parties, the unreformed or orthodox communist parties in both new and old member states. However, the Norwegian pattern on the populist right contrasts sharply with that found elsewhere in Europe, where far right parties tend to oppose European integration. This holds for established parties such as the French National Front, and to a lesser extent for the post-fascist National Alliance in Italy, as well as more recent parties such as the Freedom Party in Austria ('recent' if taking into account its change in the 1980s) and List Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands.³³ Yet the Norwegian case is not unique, and not only inasmuch as the Progress Party is somewhat more moderate than the above-cited cases. The free market orientation of the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties long provided a modifying factor to any Euroscepticism they might harbour (but this does not apply to the new Danish far right party, the Danish People's Party), and the Swedish New Democracy, briefly represented in parliament between 1991 and 1994, also cast its support of EU membership in terms of defence and security, and reducing taxes to EU levels. Moreover, the Freedom Party, National Alliance and the List Pim Fortuyn all played down Euro-scepticism during campaigns in competition with their mainstream centre-right rivals.

In short, considered on a case-by-case (or rather strategy-by-strategy) basis the Norwegian parties hardly appear amazingly Eurosceptic. What is remarkable is that there are Eurosceptic parties across the party system, except on the

they are most commonly found in other countries, and that their positions have been so persistent. Only part of this can be explained in terms of ideology and voter or policy preferences; these patterns also reflect policy alternatives and coalition games. Because Norway is associated with the EU through the EEA but not full membership, there has been little policy-driven pressure on Eurosceptic parties to adjust in the same way that other Scandinavian Eurosceptic parties have changed. More importantly, this has made it possible to anchor coalition governments in the status quo, a kind of quasi-membership that makes it possible even for fully Eurosceptic parties to participate in government (or even run a fully Eurosceptic minority cabinet, was the case between 1997 and 2000). In EU states the quest for office tends to make parties modify their positions on European integration; in Norway this has forced the Conservatives to put their quest for membership on ice. In place of a 'proper' conclusion, the concluding section turns to the prospect for an equally successful second suicide pact under the incoming 'Red-Green' coalition.

In Lieu of a Conclusion – Another Four-Year Freeze on the European Question?

The factors that shape party-based Euroscepticism are not stable, in Norway or elsewhere in Europe. Despite the strength of hard Euroscepticism in the Centre Party and much of the Socialist Left, party-based opposition to European integration is far more contingent than the continuities between 1972, 1994 and the present day might suggest. Its 'freezing' and change is linked to party competition and party system stability, particularly in terms of the distinction between pro-EU catch-all parties and the more Eurosceptic parties on the flanks or engaged in territorial opposition. Although the European question has, therefore, been integrated with existing dimensions of opposition, it has exercised a disruptive influence on coalition politics on the centre-right and party unity on the left. It hangs like Damocles' sword over most Norwegian governments. Sometimes it is tightly secured, sometimes less so.

The government that just left office kept the issue firmly off the agenda by agreeing a 'suicide clause' that meant that the coalition would break up if the Conservatives were to push for EU membership. The Red-Green parties have agreed a similar clause, but there are three reasons the dynamics may be somewhat different. First, both the Socialist Left and the Centre party advocate making use of the so-called 'EEA-veto'. This is un-chartered waters, and might trigger an EEA-crisis. The rules provide for six months' negotiations, possibly followed by suspension of part of the EEA treaty. At any rate, such a move would certainly reinvigorate the European debate. Second, in the event something goes wrong for the coalition, Labour is in a stronger position to form a minority government than the Conservatives were during the last parliament. Because Labour occupies something like a median position in the Storting, raising the EU question need not be quite as 'suicidal' as it would have been for the Conservatives over the last four years. Third, unlike Labour over the last four years, the Conservatives now have little reason not to play the EU card. They are less internally divided, and are not constrained to keep it off the agenda. Solberg now suggests that 2007 might be the right time to raise the membership question. In short, although the Red-Green parties may hope to kill off the EU issue as effectively as the centre-right parties did, this might prove more difficult. Keeping the European question off the agenda will require more careful management than it did during the last parliament.